

PLAGUE IN GROUND SQUIRRELS.

In the Public Health Reports for August 27, 1909, appears an article on "Plague Among Ground Squirrels in Contra Costa County, California." In 1894 plague began to spread from central Asia. Since then it has been carried to practically all parts of the world, including the Pacific Coast of the United States, where the disease has appeared in man, in rats, and in ground squirrels. The infection in ground squirrels has so far appeared in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, California, chiefly in the former, where, up to September 10, 1909, 220 plague infected squirrels had been found. The Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service is attempting to destroy all the ground squirrels in the involved area, or at least to so reduce them in number that the plague infection among them will die out of its own accord. This article gives a detailed account of plague infection among the ground squirrels in Contra Costa County, and the relation of squirrel plague to plague in man. It also describes the means employed for the destruction of the squirrels, and gives a serial list of infected squirrels with the location where found.

The article has been reprinted and a limited edition is available for distribution to those interested. Requests for copies should be made to the Surgeon-General, Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service, Washington, D. C.

TREATMENT OF PELLAGRA.

Much interest has been aroused during the last two years in the subject of pellagra. A study of the disease in the United States has thus far shown that it is widely distributed throughout the south, and present in some localities in the north. The question of prognosis and treatment is naturally, therefore, one of much interest. Dr. C. H. Lavinder, of the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, who for more than a year has been devoting his time to a study of the disease, has in a recent article¹ given a brief review of the subject.

He states that the prognosis must invariably be considered as grave, and that complete recovery can seldom be assured. Reliable statistics on the sub-

ject in the United States are practically limited to asylum cases, and give a mortality of 67%. It must be borne in mind, however, that asylum cases are undoubtedly the more advanced and hopeless ones, and for that reason will give a mortality much above the average. Lombroso gives statistics of hospital cases in Italy in 1883 and 1884, showing a mortality of 13%, whereas Wollenberg gives Italian statistics for 1905 showing a mortality of a little over 4%. The disease resembles tuberculosis, both in that it is an insidious and chronic condition, and that much depends upon early diagnosis and treatment, prognosis of early cases being far better than advanced ones. The importance of this is apparent when it is considered that the disease is an intoxication, and that it is probably associated with diseased corn or corn products used as food. An early diagnosis can, therefore, if the etiologic relationship of corn is correct, eliminate future doses of the poison, which otherwise would be continued.

Predisposition is believed to be an important factor in this disease. Lowered physical resistance, mental worry, insufficient food, bad housing and alcoholism are supposed to render one more susceptible.

In Italy laws have been passed regulating the use and storing of corn and derivatives, institutions have been established for the care and treatment of pellagrins, improved agricultural methods are encouraged, and assistance is given to the sick in many ways by the government.²

In the treatment of patients Lombroso recommends a liberal diet; in some cases he uses baths and cold douches, believing them to be of benefit in certain cases with nerve and skin manifestations; he has found arsenic a valuable remedy, and sodium chlorid of service.

Some authors have reported good results from the use of the newer arsenical preparations atoxyl and soamin.

Transfusion of blood from cured cases to the sick has been tried, and may prove of value.

¹ Public Health Reports, Sept. 10, 1909. Copies of this article can be obtained by making request to the Surgeon-General, Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, Washington, D. C.

² Public Health Reports, July 23, 1909, pp. 1053-1054.

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Coll. of P. & S., S. F., Cal.....	5, 22, 06	76.1**
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Cooper Med. Coll., S. F., Cal.....	11, 20, 08	75.6
Cooper Med. Coll., S. F., Cal.....	6, 1, 09	75.4
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Hahnemann Med. Coll. of the Pac., Cal.....	5, 21, 08	82.3*
Hahnemann Med. Coll. of the Pac., Cal.....	5, 21, 08	81.4*
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Univ. of So. Cal., L. A., Cal.....	6, 17, 09	81.4
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Hahn. Med. Coll., Chicago, Ill.....	3, —, 86	87.2*
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Hahn. Med. Coll., Chicago, Ill.....	3, 24, 98	80.7*
Hahn. Med. Coll., Phila., Pa.....	5, 15, 01	75.0*